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THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

GOD'S LOVE TO THE RESCUE

THE WATCHTOWER®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

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OUR COVER: God's "day of vengeance" is at hand! Yet, out of his great love, God is providing the way of escape into a global paradise. You can be one of the millions that are responding to this "good news." Read the following pages for the details

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Why will a loving God exact vengeance?

"God is love."—1 John 4:8.

VENGEANCE? From a loving God? How can that be? Is not the thought of a loving God's doing something vengeful a contradiction? It might seem that way. But let us consider the loving qualities that the Creator displays, and then we will understand more clearly how this relates to his vengeance.

[2] When we talk about God's love, we can say that it is superlative, that is, of the highest degree. And it has been expressed toward us in a multitude of ways. Consider, for example, the earth on which we live. The Bible says that the earth is 'God's gift' to humans. (Ps. 115:16) And what a marvelous gift! Think how lovingly God prepared this globe for us. God placed it in the heavens for it to get just the right amount of heat and light from the sun, and clothed it with a lovely carpet of greenery, along with a wide variety of beautifully colored flowers. And out of God's love, he stocked our earth with an abundance of animal, bird and fish life, and provided an overflow of grain and other foods.—Ps. 104:1, 13-15.

[3] However, God's love is expressed not only in the things he made for us; it is also expressed in the way he made us. He made us to enjoy his creations. How well the psalmist expressed it when he said: "O Jehovah, . . . I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made"! (Ps. 139:1, 14) Out of his generosity and love, God gave us eyes to behold the beauty of the world about us. He gave us ears with which we could delight in different sounds such as music and human voices. He gave us a nose by which we could take in the aromas of food and the fragrance of flowers. And to top it all is the human brain, which reasons, remembers and coordinates the body's actions. Really, we have to marvel at God's rich endowment of our bodies. Truly, "God is love."—1 John 4:8.

1. What will help us to understand an apparent contradiction in our theme?
2. Why can we say God's love is superlative, and what are some of his loving provisions for which we should be thankful? (Ps. 136:1-6)
3. How did God display love in creating us humans?

"HOW many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions. . . . Bless Jehovah, O my soul. Praise Jah, you people!"—Ps. 104:24, 35.

God's love to the rescue

[4] When God created the first man, Adam, he placed him in the beautiful paradise of Eden. What pleasure Adam must have found in the abundance of God's loving provisions around him! Later, God formed Eve and brought her to Adam. How delightful for Eve, on her first day of life, to be united with a husband and head who would cherish and guide her! Together they could look forward to carrying out God's will in beautifying and populating the earth, and having loving dominion over the animal creation. What a grand future God placed before them!

[5] However, sad to say, that future was not to be, at least not for them. A rebellious spirit creature selfishly took himself out from under God's love, making himself into Satan the Devil. This Devil persuaded Eve, and through her, Adam, to 'do their own thing.' Thus, they took a selfish course, independent of their Creator. But in doing this, they showed themselves completely unworthy of their Creator's love. So God rightly passed the sentence of death on those willful sinners. Yet, out of his love for mankind, he permitted them to survive until they could produce children, otherwise we would not be alive right now. Moreover, though the human race had inherited sin and death from our first parents, the loving God provided a basis for hope.—Gen. 3:16-23; Rom. 8:20, 21.

[6] In what way? Well, at the very onset of rebellion, God made known that he would raise up a 'Seed,' that is, an offspring. He would send this One forth from his own loyal heavenly organization to undo all the damage caused by the Devil, and Adam and Eve. However, back there in Eden, the loving God also declared that he would execute vengeance upon Satan and all others who would make themselves part of the offspring of Satan by turning from God's love.—Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9.

GOD OF LOVE, AND OF VENGEANCE

[7] So the God of love declared himself also to be a God of vengeance. But his

4. How was God's love expressed in the paradise of Eden?
5. (a) How did our first ancestors become unworthy of God's love? (b) Yet how was God's love extended to their offspring?
6. What pronouncements in Eden showed forth God's love, and how?
7. In line with Deuteronomy 32:43, what reason do we have for gladness?

THE GREATEST GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE

Out of the depth of his love for suffering mankind, God was willing to sacrifice his most precious possession, his most intimate companion, the "master worker" with him in creation, the "one he was specially fond of day by day." He was prepared to send his firstborn heavenly Son down to this earth, to suffer all the reproaches, indignities and cruelties that the Devil and his dupes might heap upon him. Under test, the Son would prove that, as a perfect man, he could uphold God's sovereignty under the severest trials, even to death itself. Moreover, he would thus "give his soul a ransom" on behalf of the many from sin-stricken mankind who would exercise faith in him. (Prov. 8:30; Matt. 20:28) Jesus could therefore say concerning his sheeplike followers, both of the "little flock" and his "other sheep": "I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed." The majority would attain to that life by a resurrection from the dead. (Luke 12:32; John 10:16, 28; 5:28, 29) What an undeserved kindness this is, as expressed toward helpless mankind! If we should spurn this loving provision, indeed we would be deserving of God's vengeful wrath!

taking vengeance on his enemies would be right. Why so? Because it would clear the way for all persons who love God to be glad, to rejoice. Surely, we now can rejoice that God will clear the way for us to enjoy his provision of everlasting life. Notice what God inspired Moses to say: "Be glad, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and he will pay back vengeance to his adversaries."—Deut. 32:43.

[8] Yes, our loving God purposes to vindicate the rightfulness of his rule, and to rescue those who love him from their adversaries. Why, he will even rescue us from the great enemy, death, that comes into our lives by inheritance from our first parents. (Rom. 5:12) But how does God do this? The Bible tells us that he does it by the gift of his Son: "God is love. By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:25, 26.

[9] So God provided his Son Jesus Christ to release us from the death that comes to us because of the sin inherited from Adam. Yes, as the Bible says at First Timothy 2:6, Christ "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all" who would exercise faith in him. Jesus could therefore say concerning his sheeplike followers: "I have come that they might have life and might have it in abundance," yes, everlasting life.—John 10:10.

[10] Yet, repeatedly, the Bible tells us that the 'God of love' is also a 'God of vengeance.' Why? Because God's love cannot forever tolerate evil. (Nah. 1:2; Deut. 32:35, 41) That is why the apostle Paul writes about the "revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess. 1:6-9) How important it is, then, that we come to know God! In this mixed-up world of so many different religions, how vital it is, as the Bible says, 'to seek the true God and really find him!'—Acts 17:27.

BALANCING VENGEANCE WITH LOVE

[11] However, let us return to the beginnings of human history. This will help us to understand better the relationship between God's love and his vengeance. Lovingly, God had permitted the offspring of

8, 9. (a) Out of his love, what two things does God purpose to do? (b) In expression of his love, what marvelous gift has God made?

10. (a) Why is the 'God of love' a God also of "vengeance"? (b) Why is it so important today that we know and obey God?

11, 12. (a) What situation developed early in human history, calling for what action on God's part? (b) How was God's vengeance there balanced out with his love?

OUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT!

Most people are born into a religion. But does this mean that they worship the true God? Rather, is not the religion of many an accident of birth? But our very lives depend on **'knowing** God and **obeying** the good news about the Lord Jesus,' whom he sent forth to ransom us from sin and death. (2 Thess. 1:8; Mark 10:45) Quite obviously, the world about us does not "know God." The Bible states plainly that there is **"one** God and Father of all persons." (Eph. 4:6) Yet mankind is divided into worshiping a multiplicity of religious gods. There are the Buddhas, the ancestral gods of Shintoism and Confucianism, Allah of the Moslems, also Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—the trinity of the Hindus—and Christendom's trinity of Father, Son and "Holy Ghost." Many persons even worship prominent men, dead or alive, such as "rock" stars, sports heroes and revolutionary leaders.

Adam to multiply. But wayward humans did not respond to that love. So, after some 500 years, Jehovah sent his prophet Enoch to pronounce divine judgment on wicked humans because of their ungodly deeds and the shocking things that they spoke against God. (Jude 14, 15) Another thousand years passed, and that ancient world reached its zenith of immorality and violence. Thus, God's Word says, "the earth came to be ruined in the sight of the true God and the earth became filled with violence. So God saw the earth and, look! it was ruined."—Gen. 6:11, 12.

[12] Now, what would God do? Would he exact vengeance? Yes! But even in this, his quality of love came to the fore. Why do we say so? At that time, there was one family on earth devoted to doing God's will. It was the family of Noah, the man who is called in the Bible "a preacher of righteousness." Lovingly, Jehovah had Noah construct an ark "for the saving of his household." Then came the global flood, which wiped out Noah's wicked neighbors. (2 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 11:7) The entire earth was cleansed of ruinous violence and immorality, so that it again became a fit place for the families of mankind to multiply.—Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:21-23; 8:15-17.

[13] However, sinful tendencies inherited from Adam remained, and soon godless humans began to show bad traits again. (Ps. 51:5) Take, for example, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who dwelt in a district that was once "like the garden of Jehovah." The Bible tells us that "the men of Sodom were bad and were gross sinners against Jehovah." They were homosexuals, and were violent in seeking to gratify their lusts. (Gen. 13:10, 13; 19:4-11) The loving God, Jehovah, determined to destroy those cities. In this way righteous Abraham and his nephew Lot would no longer have to put up with such vile neighbors. As Genesis 18:25 says, the "Judge of all the earth," Jehovah, did 'what was right.' He delivered Lot and his two daughters, but rained fiery destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah, decontaminating that entire district.—Luke 17:29; Jude 7.

[14] Years afterward Jehovah again did 'what was right' toward his people, Israel. How? In arranging to drive away the Canaanites from the Promised Land. (Deut. 18:9-12) 'But was that not unfair to those innocent Canaanites?' someone may ask. Innocent Canaanites? By no means were they innocent! Those Canaanites had become disgusting in their practices of incest, sexual uncleanness, adultery, sacrificing of children, homosexuality and bestiality. For example, in the worship of their false gods they sacrificed their children by throwing them alive into the fire. Also, they had female and male temple prostitutes.* Therefore, Jehovah

13. Was Jehovah's judging of Sodom and Gomorrah unloving, and why do you so answer?

* See also *Aid to Bible Understanding*, published by the Watch Tower Society, pages 76, 145 and 287, under "Anath," "Ashtoreth" and "Canaan, Canaanite."

14, 15. (a) How innocent were the Canaanites? (b) Did God act rightly in executing vengeance on them?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS IN CANAAN:

"Canaanites worshipped, by immoral indulgence, as a religious rite, in the presence of their gods; and then, by murdering their first-born children, as a sacrifice to these same gods. It seems that, in large measure, the land of Canaan had become a sort of Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale. . . . Did a civilization of such abominable filth and brutality have any right longer to exist? . . . Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than he did."—"Halley's Bible Handbook," H. H. Halley, p. 161.

gave these instructions to his people: "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, because by all these things the nations whom I am sending out from before you have made themselves unclean. Consequently the land is unclean, and I shall bring punishment for its error upon it, and the land will vomit its inhabitants out."—Lev. 18:1-25.

[15] Again, it was out of love for his own people that Jehovah commanded Israel to clear out those wrongdoers. Their filthy way of life endangered God's people. It was as the Bible puts it, "something detestable to Jehovah." Rightly, then, God's vengeance blazed against them.—Ps. 106: 34-40; Deut. 18:12.

[16] On the other hand, how did God deal with the people of Israel? Jehovah expressed a most tender love toward them. Moses described it in these beautiful words at Deuteronomy 32:11 and 12: "Just as an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its fledglings, spreads out its wings, takes them, carries them on its pinions, Jehovah alone kept leading him, and there was no foreign god along with him." But, alas! In time, foreign gods did intrude into Israel's worship. Thus, the God who had declared that he would pay back vengeance to their adversaries was compelled to exact vengeance from his own people. But how patient Jehovah was toward Israel! Why, for 900 years he endured their waywardness! During all that time, Jehovah extended his hand of mercy toward them.

16. How were God's love and patience expressed toward Israel?

"I take delight," declared Jehovah God, "not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living. Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die, O house of Israel?"—Ezek. 33:11.

[17] Time and again, God warned his people of the consequences of their idolatry, their immorality, and their shedding of innocent blood. But, at last, Jehovah was compelled to exact vengeance from Israel by allowing King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and their temple. The survivors were carried off to Babylon. However, after 70 years God maneuvered the overthrow of Babylon so that an appreciative Israelite remnant could return to their own land and resume pure worship there.—2 Ki. 24:3, 4; 2 Chron. 36: 12-21; Ezra 1:1-3; Heb. 12:6.

JESUS SPEAKS OF LOVE AND VENGEANCE

[18] What did Jesus Christ have to say about this matter of God's love and vengeance? For one thing, he spoke warmly of his Father's love, saying: "God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) But did he hesitate to speak of God's vengeance? Why, no! For the Bible says that Jesus, just like his Father, 'loved righteousness, and hated lawless-

17. (a) What warning did God give Israel? (b) How was God's executing of vengeance on Israel tempered by his love?

18. What expressions did Jesus make concerning (a) God's love, and (b) his vengeance?

JEHOVAH'S EXCELLING QUALITY OF MERCY

Even when he severely disciplined rebellious Israel, Jehovah extended his hand of mercy, saying through his prophet Jeremiah: "Not to time indefinite will Jehovah keep on casting off. For although he has caused grief, he will also certainly show mercy according to the abundance of his loving-kindness. For not out of his own heart has he afflicted or does he grieve the sons of men."—Lam. 3:31-33

ness.' Jesus in particular hated the lawlessness and bloodguilt of the religious leaders. (Heb. 1:9; Ps. 11:5, 7) He never minced words when he spoke to, or about, the Jewish clergy of his day. Three times in his Sermon on the Mount, he called them "hypocrites." (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16) He told those clergy: "You are from your father the Devil," thus linking them with 'the seed of the serpent.' (John 8:44; Gen. 3:15) Then, just three days before he was murdered, Jesus denounced those Jewish religious leaders publicly, saying: "Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are you to flee from the judgment of Gehenna?" —Matt. 23:13-33.

[19] Did this mean that Jesus was unloving? Not at all, for while Jesus knew that those Jews were about to add to their bloodguilt by killing him, yet he went on to say, in Matthew chapter 23: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Matt. 23:37, 38; Acts 3:13-15) Thirty-seven years later Roman armies sacked Jerusalem and destroyed its temple. This was a calamity in which 1,100,000 of its rebellious people died! Then, at that time, the full force of Jesus' prophetic words became clear. Rightly, Jehovah had exacted vengeance!

[20] Centuries earlier, Isaiah, one of the prophets reportedly murdered in ancient Jerusalem, spoke these words: "The spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me, for the reason that Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones . . . to proclaim the year of goodwill on the part of Jehovah and the day of vengeance on the part of our God; to comfort all the mourning ones."—Isa. 61:1, 2.

[21] Jesus read this prophecy, in part, at the start of his earthly ministry and applied it to himself as the Chief Anointed One of Jehovah. (Luke 4:18-21) However, when Jesus quoted those words of Isaiah he stopped short of mentioning the day of God's vengeance. Why? Apparently the major emphasis on proclaiming the day of God's vengeance would come "in the final part of the days," as Isaiah chapter 2 puts it. Have we now reached that time?

19. (a) Why were Jesus' attitude and warning message most loving? (b) But how did Jehovah act rightly?

20. In connection with love and vengeance, what interesting features are to be found at Isaiah 61:1, 2?

21. (a) What may have been Jesus' reason for quoting Isaiah 61:1, 2 only in part? (b) What question arises, involving Isaiah 2:2-5?

Is God's day of vengeance near?

"Jehovah has a day of vengeance."—Isa. 34:8.

JESUS CHRIST foretold that the time for God to execute vengeance would be identified by "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out" because of the problems agitating human society. He said that men would "become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth." (Luke 21:25, 26) Do we see this situation as we pass into 1981?

1. Does Luke 21:25, 26 have its application today?

YES! WE CERTAINLY DO!

[2] The present world crisis is the outgrowth of distresses that have multiplied among mankind since the nations first became locked in total warfare in the year 1914. According to the prophecy of Revelation chapter 11, that year when "the nations became wrathful"—1914—also marked the time when rightfully "the kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ." (Rev. 11:15, 18) This enthroning of Christ with authority to rule is a preliminary step that paves the way for the execution of vengeance.

[3] Today, is anyone commissioned by God's spirit to proclaim the day of Jehovah's vengeance and to comfort all who mourn? Yes, but it is not the churches of Christendom. They have no message of real comfort; nor do they want Jehovah as their God. Not only do they avoid the use of Jehovah's name, but they persecute true Christians who do honor that name.

[4] However, Jehovah's Witnesses are happy to bear God's name, the greatest in the universe! They are glad to be called *Jehovah's* Witnesses. They are overjoyed that, since the Kingdom's being established in that eventful year 1914, they have been privileged to declare Jehovah's "day of vengeance" in all the earth. Indeed, they are determined, as Micah 4:5 puts it, to "walk in the name of Jehovah [their] God to time indefinite, even forever"! And they are delighted that millions of mourning ones have listened to their message, have been comforted and have flocked to the side of God's incoming kingdom.

GOD'S VENGEANCE—IS IT DESERVED?

[5] However, is the world today really so bad that it must meet up with God's vengeance? Listen to the inspired words of the apostle Paul. He said: "Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here." These critical times are the final fruitage, the end result of the failure of people to respond to the preaching of the truth. (2 Tim. 2:23-26) Even

2. (a) What indicates that Revelation 11:15, 18 began its fulfillment in 1914? (b) To what are these events a preliminary?
3. Where do Christendom's churches stand with regard to God's message of vengeance and comfort?
4. What reasons do we have to be glad?
5. (a) Of what are these "critical times" the final fruitage? (b) In fulfillment of Paul's prophecy on "the last days," what conditions do we now see in Christendom?

THE SHAPE OF THINGS IN THE WORLD

"TOWARDS COLLISION: WORLD. Military expenditure continues to burgeon alarmingly . . . it is now . . . double the tally a decade ago. . . . The amount the world spent equipping each soldier in 1966 was 60 times the amount spent educating each child."—"To the Point," November 3, 1978

". . . FRENCH FORESEE DISASTER. The atmosphere of trouble and fear of the future is real. Some people have gotten to the point of mumbling that economic collapse or war or both are sure to come, and they seem almost relieved at the idea that there is nothing to be done but resign themselves to coming disaster."—New York "Times," November 17, 1979

"WEST GERMANS FEAR ARMAGEDDON. The spectre of war has returned to haunt West Germany as the international situation seems to be slipping inexorably out of control. . . . Almost 60 per cent of the population, according to a recent poll, believe that war is likely or at least possible in the next three years."—"The Times," London, April 23, 1980

"The world spends more than $500 billion a year on military activities, or about a million dollars a minute. As if this huge sum were not enough, we are about to see a sharp rise in military spending."—"World Press Review," August, 1980

in the realm of Christendom we now see a frightening increase in crime and violence, the breakdown of the family, disrespect for authority, and loss of morality. At the root of it all are selfishness and greed, the lack of genuine love. Paul goes on to say: "Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . without love of goodness, . . . lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Well, do we see this prophecy being fulfilled throughout the earth today? Yes, indeed. It is being fulfilled in precise detail.

[6] Jesus himself, in prophesying of the "sign . . . of the conclusion of the system of things," said: "Because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matt. 24:3, 12) How true this is even of Christendom, as well as of the entire world today! As each Christmastime comes around, there is much talk in Christendom about love, about peace and goodwill among men, but do the nations of Christendom practice such things? Significant are the words of Britain's prime minister, spoken just one week before Christmas, 1979. She said: "We face a new decade—I have called it 'the dangerous decade'—in which the challenges to our security and to our way of life may, if anything, be more acute than in the 1970's."

[7] How are the nations responding to such challenges? By intensifying their war preparations. Think of it! This loveless world is spending about one million dollars a minute on armaments, more than 500 billion dollars a year! All of this escalates a doomsday situation for which the world can find no solution. According to information published by a group of physicians, scientists and others in the New York *Times* of March 2, 1980, if a nuclear war were to break out tomorrow, it could, in just one hour, destroy most life on earth —thousands of millions of people. Yet the nations are working feverishly to produce even more diabolical superweapons.

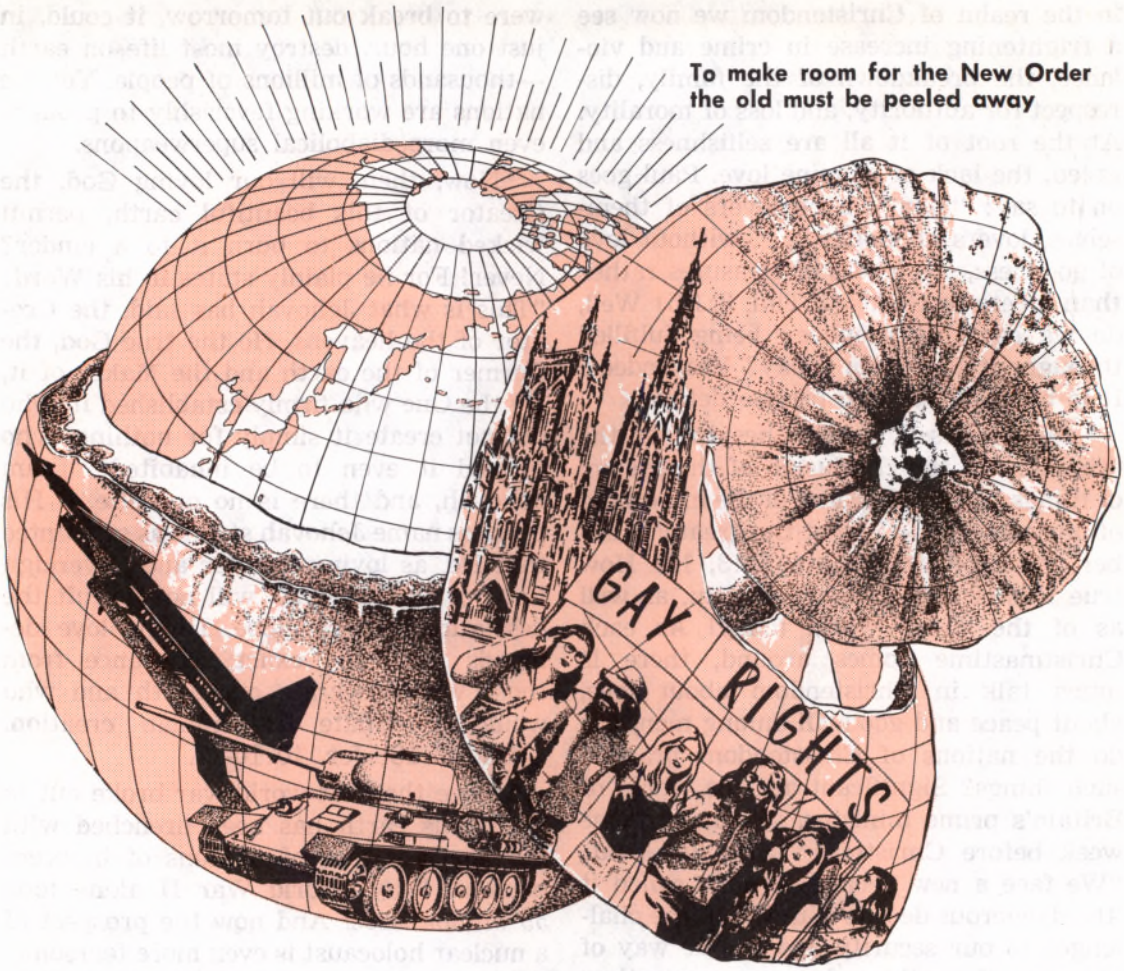
[8] Now, then, will our loving God, the Creator of this beautiful earth, permit wicked nations to burn it to a cinder? Never! For he plainly states in his Word: "This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited: 'I am Jehovah, and there is no one else.' " His peerless name Jehovah stands as guarantee that He, as loving Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe, will not permit the desolating of our globe. Divine love demands that God exact vengeance from those who desecrate our earth and who would annihilate his human creation. —Isa. 45:18; Jer. 10:10-12.

[9] Since the first world war broke out in 1914, this earth has been drenched with the blood of tens of millions of innocent persons. Why, World War II alone took *55 million lives!* And now the prospect of a nuclear holocaust is even more fearsome. So, since the nations refuse to disarm, then our loving God declares that shortly he will disarm them, in his own effective and permanent way. He says: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." (Ps. 46:8, 9) Yes, it is Jehovah's loving purpose to do what the nations will never do—pulverize all their war equipment, even to defusing all their nuclear missiles. As Jehovah says: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." (Rom. 12:19; Zeph. 3:8, 9) Does not our loving God's promise that

6. What situation has developed in fulfillment of Matthew 24:12?

7, 8. (a) What doomsday situation do we now find? (b) What assurances does Jehovah give, and how do these involve "love" and "vengeance"?

9. Since the nations refuse to disarm, what does Jehovah propose to do, and why?



To make room for the New Order the old must be peeled away

he will exact vengeance make us glad? It should!

SORROWS MULTIPLY

[10] The wars fought since 1914 have helped to bring in their wake horrible consequences. Among these are unbridled indulgence in sex, resulting in epidemics of venereal disease and unwanted pregnancies. These unwanted pregnancies have brought with them a tidal wave of abortions. It is estimated that now, worldwide, about 30 to 40 million unborn children are aborted, murdered, every year! That is the most extensive murder of innocents the world has ever seen, dwarfing the deaths in the worst year of any war in history.

[11] Also, in recent times, we have seen drug addiction, divorce, delinquency and lawlessness of all types on a frightful scale. Today, the homosexual community boasts that it has 20 million adherents in the United States alone. Recently, one homosexual set a modern record by the shocking murder of 33 young men he had sexually assaulted. Yet homosexuality is only one aspect of the immorality increasingly practiced in Christendom and throughout

10. The wars of this century have brought what shocking consequences?

11. In what ways are 'wicked men advancing from bad to worse'?

the earth. It is just as Second Timothy chapter 3 says about these "last days," that "wicked men . . . will advance from bad to worse."—Vs. 13.

[12] Viewing the immoral world around us, we are compelled to exclaim: How like Noah's day! How like the time of Sodom and Gomorrah! How like the depraved Canaanites and the backsliding Israelites! As this present world sinks ever deeper into the mire of immorality, we are reminded of the warning of the apostle Paul that "those practicing such things are deserving of death." (Rom. 1:18, 26-32) No, the loving God will not much longer tolerate the horrendous wickedness of this system of things. Instead, he will bring to ruin those who make his earth filthy. —Rev. 11:18.

IDENTIFYING A "FAMOUS PROSTITUTE"

[13] However, the Bible speaks also of spiritual immorality. This is indulged in by those who claim to be practicing pure religion, but who get mixed up in the affairs of Satan's world. The Bible says: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (Jas. 4:4) Such friendship—spiritual adultery—on the part of those who claim to be God's servants provides another major reason for Jehovah's exacting vengeance. Why do we say so?

[14] It is because of what is said in Revelation chapter 17. There we read of "the great harlot who sits on many waters." What does this mean? The "many waters" are clearly identified for us at verse 15 as meaning "peoples and crowds and nations and tongues." But who is this "great harlot" that exercises power over the people? *The Jerusalem Bible,* a Catholic translation, refers to her as the "famous prostitute." What has she done to make her so famous? Revelation 17:5 provides a clue, stating: "Upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth.' "

[15] So the "famous prostitute" has a name, "Babylon the Great." This links her with the Babylon of ancient history, in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, which history reveals was full of depraved sex worship and corruption. (Dan. 4:28-30) Today, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon is no more. Her site in modern Iraq is a desola-

12. What indications do we have that this wicked world has reached its end?
13. What is meant by 'spiritual adultery'?
14. Identify the "famous prostitute" and the "many waters" on which she sits.
15. What happened to Babylon, but what legacy did she leave?

FRUITAGE OF "THE LAST DAYS"

"The Los Angeles Police Department reported that 25,000 boys 17 years old or younger in that city alone have been recruited into a homosexual ring to provide sex for adult male customers. One boy, just 12, was described as a $1,000 a day prostitute."—"Indianapolis Sunday Star," June 17, 1979

"There were about 1,000 prostitute arrests in Denver last year, and 400 of them were men. That record probably will be exceeded this year and for the first time the number of male prostitutes arrested could exceed the number of females."—"Rocky Mountain News," July 8, 1979

"The highest court of the United Methodist Church has ruled that an avowed homosexual . . . may remain as pastor of the Washington Square Church in New York City."—The New York "Times," November 3, 1979

tion, "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isa. 13:19-22) However, ancient Babylon did leave a legacy for mankind. And what is that? Her idolatry—her religion!

[16] From earliest times following the Flood, Babylon was identified with false religion. It was there that men, in defiance of Jehovah, built a city and a religious tower with its top in the heavens. And when Jehovah confused their language, it was from Babylon that they scattered over all the earth, taking their false religion with them. In the fourth century, apostate Christians fused the doctrine and ceremonial practice of Babylon into the religious system that exists to this day in the various sects of Catholicism and Protestantism. Thus, there has developed a world empire of false religion, "Babylon the Great," embracing "Christian" and non-Christian religions. Because of the involvement of "Babylon the Great" in the persecutions, violence, and even the world wars of history, God passes judgment on her, saying: "In her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth."—Rev. 17:5, 6; 18:24; Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9.

[17] Babylon the Great's adulterous "friendship with the world" goes even farther. It includes her domineering relationship with a symbolic "beast." For she is described at Revelation 17:3 as also "sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast that was full of blasphemous names." In the Bible, "beasts" are often used to symbolize political nations. (Dan. 7:2-8; 8:5-8, 20, 21; Rev. 13:1-18) But here the prophecy speaks of a grotesque combination "beast" having "seven heads and ten horns." Modern history shows that this "beast" first appeared in 1920. It was a combine of the nations—the League of Nations. It took a plunge into temporary inactivity during World War II. But—in fulfillment of prophecy—it appeared again as the United Nations in 1945. Shortly, it "goes off into destruction."—Rev. 17:8-11.

[18] False religion, "Babylon the Great," has tried to give a guiding hand to both the League of Nations and the United Nations. But God's Word shows that all such religious-political intimacies by popes and other religious leaders will soon come

16. (a) How did a world empire of false religion develop? (b) What judgment does God pass on Babylon the Great, and why?

17. What is the "scarlet-colored wild beast," and how has it fulfilled prophecy?

18. How will Babylon the Great's religious-political intimacies end?

THE UNITED NATIONS OR GOD'S KINGDOM—WHICH?

Religion still tries to sit atop the U.N. and control its policies. A recent move was that by Pope John Paul II, who appeared before the United Nations General Assembly on October 2, 1979, amid a great fanfare of publicity. The pope declared: "The formal reason for my intervention today is, without any question, **the special bond of cooperation** that links the apostolic See with the United Nations Organization. . . . I hope that the United Nations will ever remain the supreme forum of peace and justice, the authentic seat of freedom of peoples and individuals in their longing for a better future." But the pope did not see fit even to mention God's instrument for establishing peace, justice and freedom—the Kingdom concerning which Jesus prayed to his Father: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matt. 6:10; Rev. 11:15) The emergence of powerful antireligious forces in the U.N. does not bode well for the future of the 'world empire of false religion.'—Rev. 17:16, 17.

to an end. At a time when the "famous prostitute" thinks she is sitting pretty, God will cause the symbolic "ten horns" of the United Nations "beast" to turn their militarized might against her. They will get her off their back, devastate her, destroy her completely, as if by fire.—Rev. 17:16, 17.

"GET OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE"

[19] As that hour of judgment approaches, how is God expressing his love? In this way: to all sincere Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Hindus—to people of all false religions who want to become God's people—God extends the urgent invitation recorded in Revelation 18:4, 5: "Get out of [Babylon the Great], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind."

[20] Without a doubt, the execution of God's judgment draws ever closer! Anti-religious nations already wield great power in the United Nations. Oil-hungry militaristic countries threaten the Moslem world as well as those nations long regarded as the bulwark of Christendom's religions. That is why it is now high time for all lovers of truth and righteousness to get well away from the "famous prostitute," yes, to flee to God's kingdom.

[21] What follows the devastation of "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion? The Scriptures indicate that the "ten horns" of the "beast" will turn against true religion, as represented on earth by Jehovah's Witnesses. But when that happens, those nations will find themselves fighting against God at Armageddon! And Armageddon is not just a small corner in the land of Palestine. Rather, Armageddon is a worldwide situation that calls for vengeance in "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," the greatest conflict of all time!—Rev. 16:14, 16; 17:12-14.

[22] The Bible says that God uses Christ Jesus with the armies of heaven to 'judge and carry on war in righteousness.' Yes, Armageddon will be a righteous war. Righteous? How so? In that it will bring deserved vengeance upon the nations and peoples of earth that have chosen not to know God and who oppose his right to rule. It will be selective in its destruction. It will destroy the wicked, but bring salvation to all who "obey the good news about our Lord Jesus," says the apostle Paul. Thus, Armageddon will balance out God's vengeance with God's love.—2 Thess. 1:8; Ps. 145:20; Rev. 19:11-21.

[23] Do we not appreciate, then, why the 'God of love' must be also a God of vengeance? It is because he loves righteousness and hates wickedness, and so should we. (Ps. 145:17-21) How necessary it is that Jehovah's great name and purposes be vindicated! How necessary that our earth be cleansed of all the bloodguilt, corruption and immorality that have sullied this beautiful creation of God over the past millenniums! Only then will the earth become the global paradise that God has purposed for mankind. So, first, the matchless 'God of love' must clear the way by inflicting vengeance upon his enemies. Are we not glad that his day of vengeance is now at hand? Let us, then, be among those who accept Jehovah's loving invitation: "Be glad, you nations, with his people, for he will . . . pay back vengeance to his adversaries."—Deut. 32:43.

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19. How does God now express his love to all sincere religious persons?
20. Why is it high time to get well away from Babylon the Great?
21. What is Armageddon, and when do the nations find themselves there?
22. How do the Scriptures show Armageddon to be a righteous war?
23. (a) What kind of God is Jehovah, as shown by Psalm 145:17-21? (b) Why, then, does this 'God of love' bring vengeance? (c) What action should we take with regard to the approaching "day of vengeance"?

A historic CELEBRATION

"THE WAR of the great day of God the Almighty" at Armageddon will be the greatest in the history of our globe, and it will be the last. (Rev. 16:14, 16) As God's prophet declared, for the comfort of those who love him: "Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of distress. . . . He is causing an outright extermination. Distress will not rise up a second time." —Nah. 1:7-9.

What follows next? The apostle John tells us that he hears "a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven." In grand chorus, this angelic host is singing: "Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous. For he has executed judgment upon the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand." (Rev. 19:1, 2, "Kingdom Interlinear Translation") What rejoicing! Because, for all time, the oppressions, the apostasy and the murderous ways of the world empire of false religion, "Babylon the Great," have been swept off the face of God's earth.

What else does the apostle hear? "And right away for the second time they said: 'Hallelujah!' " Then a third "Hallelujah!" rings out, and appropriately John, who is elsewhere called 'a Son of Thunder,' adds the climactic words: "I heard what was as a voice of a great crowd and as a sound of many waters and as a sound of heavy thunders. They said: 'Hallelujah, because Jehovah our God, the Almighty, has begun to rule as king.' "—Rev. 19:3-6, "Int."; Mark 3:17.

The singing of those heavenly voices is far grander than any "Hallelujah chorus" ever heard on this earth. The myriads of angels know what that song is all about. So they sing it with delightful feeling and expression: "Hallelujah!"—meaning "Praise Jah, you people!" God's people on earth come out of the "great tribulation" to share in that song, praising Jah, Jehovah, the Sovereign Lord of all the universe, for his great victory over all the forces of wickedness.

Other glorious events follow. Jehovah's people are invited to "rejoice and be overjoyed," because now a marriage takes place in heaven. The Lamb is united with his "wife"—the full number of 144,000 resurrected "holy ones," who have been identified by the "righteous acts" that they performed while humans on earth. (Rev. 19:6-8; 14:1-5) The governmental arrangement of the "new heavens" is now complete. Already, before the "great tribulation," the Lamb had been shepherding a "great crowd" of human worshipers. (Rev. 7:9, 14) But now the promise that God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes" is to be fulfilled toward all mankind, including the resurrected dead, as a "new earth" society begins to operate among humans.—Rev. 21:1, 4; 2 Pet. 3:13.

God's loyal ones in heaven and on earth will be united in that grandest, that most meaningful singing of the Hallelujah chorus. For Jah, Jehovah, will have gained the victory!

The future for God's loyal ones

"JEHOVAH is righteous; he does love righteous acts. The upright are the ones that will behold his face." Those words of King David are found at Psalm 11, verse 7. And today, what a glorious future lies ahead of those who perform righteous acts in God's service! Revelation chapter 7 describes "a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," that survives the final war of Armageddon. Over them God spreads his "tent," drawing these dedicated servants into a grand intimacy with him.—Rev. 7:9-17.

Our loving God does not want us to be destroyed with the wicked in His day of vengeance. He wants us to find salvation. And to encourage us in this, he provides in the Bible a glorious forevision of "a new heaven and a new earth." That new earth will be a stable human society, united by divine love under the "new heaven" composed of Christ Jesus and his 144,000 corulers. All these anointed ones will have shown themselves to be loyal to God here on earth, and will have been resurrected to rule with Christ in his heavenly kingdom. The billions of mankind will find it easy to place great confidence in those tried and proven governors.—Rev. 14:1, 4, 5; 20:6; 21:1, 2.

Did we say billions of humans here on earth under Kingdom rule? Yes, billions! For that will be the grand time of the resurrection of the dead into the paradise earth. That is the paradise that Jesus spoke about to the evildoer who was with him at Calvary. (Luke 23:43) What rejoicing there will be among those resurrected ones over being released from the grip of death! Tears, mourning, outcry, pain—even inherited death—will be no more.—Rev. 20:11-14; 21:3, 4.

In that new order, blind eyes will be opened to rejoice in beholding God's beautiful creations. Deaf ears will be unstopped to listen to music more delightful than any yet composed by man. Song writers themselves will be perfect, and their melodies will exalt Jehovah and his grand accomplishments. The tongue of the dumb will be loosed, to share in delightful conversation and in praising Jehovah. Lame ones will run again, and radiant health will be the lot of all mankind. All these blessings, and many more, will flow to humanity.—Compare Isaiah 35:1-6.

In God's new order, there will be no corrupt politicians to oppress, no armies to kill and maim, no selfish profiteers to inflate oil and commodity prices. No longer will thousands of Babylonish religious sects confuse people, or shed innocent blood in religious warfare. Instead, all mankind will be united in the one true worship of our loving God, who declares from his heavenly throne: "Look! I am making all things new."—Rev. 21:5.

Let all who look forward to that grand provision of Jehovah now share in the fulfillment of his prophecy: "Your loyal ones will bless you. About the glory of your kingship they will talk."—Ps. 145:10, 11.

It pays to swallow your pride

FOR at least half a dozen reasons it pays to swallow your pride. This is not to say, however, that for the Christian pride must be categorically condemned each and every time. For though pride often arises from haughtiness and lack of humility, at times it has to do with self-respect, praiseworthy accomplishment or our relationship with God.

For example, the apostle Paul wrote to the congregation at Thessalonica, which it was his privilege to establish, in these words: "We are obligated to give God thanks always for you, brothers, as it is fitting, because your faith is growing exceedingly and the love of each and all of you is increasing one toward the other. As a result we ourselves take pride in you among the congregations of God because of your endurance and faith in all your persecutions and the tribulations that you are bearing." Such faith and love on their part made proper pride on Paul's part appropriate.—2 Thess. 1:3, 4.

The apostle Paul also spoke of some who took pride in God. (Rom. 2:17) And, repeatedly, in the Bible we read of God's servants' making their boast in Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, or, it might be said, taking pride in them.—Ps. 34:2; 1 Cor. 1:31; Phil. 3:3.

It doubtless could be said that there are times when family members may take proper pride in the qualities, virtues or achievements of one another, as when a husband is proud of his wife's cooking. Or parents may be proud that children they have reared make a choice of full-time service to their God.

However, you may be surprised to know that, in the Word of God, pride is referred to in a condemnatory way 20 times as often as it is in a favorable way. Why is this so? Why do we need to be counseled repeatedly against pride? Because usually it is an ingrained form of selfishness that can so easily get us into trouble unless we are always on guard against it. Yes, "the inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up."—Gen. 8:21.

Really, it is as though we needed to lean over backward, as the saying goes, to reject anything and everything that savors of self-exaltation or pride. How many have made fools of themselves because of pride! Worse yet, how many have perished because of their pride! Well did an English essayist once observe: "In general, pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes." A modern notorious example is that of Adolf Hitler.

Most seriously counting against pride is the fact that it can make us enemies of Jehovah God, for we read: "God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones." (1 Pet. 5:5) Yes, in this sense "everyone that is proud in heart is something detestable to Jehovah." (Prov. 16:5) No wonder that we further read that "pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." —Prov. 16:18.

Many are the Bible examples showing that it is the course of wisdom to swallow one's pride, as when we are given counsel. A case in point was the Syrian army chief Naaman who was afflicted by leprosy. It hurt his pride to have Elisha's attendant tell him to dip himself seven times in the waters of the Jordan in order to be cured.

Naaman bragged that the rivers of Damascus were superior to the Jordan. However, he swallowed his pride and let his servants persuade him to act on the message sent by Elisha. Doing so, Naaman was cured of his leprosy. Surely it paid him to swallow his pride. (2 Ki. 5:11-14) So it is with us. When we are given wise counsel that goes against our inclinations, we do well to swallow our pride.

In this connection, we read: "Give a reproof to a wise person and he will love you." "The ear that is listening to the reproof of life lodges right in among wise people." (Prov. 9:8; 15:31) One who refused to accept reproof in earliest times was Cain. Jehovah God warned him: "There is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving; and will you, for your part, get the mastery over it?" Because of his pride Cain refused to listen and so became a murderer and was ostracized. (Gen. 4:7) Another example was that of King Uzziah. His military successes so went to his head that he sought to usurp the functions of a priest. When rebuked, he stubbornly refused to swallow his pride and, as a result, died as a leper. —2 Chron. 26:16-21.

At times we may be slighted or insulted in one way or another. What shall we do? Retaliate? Respond in kind? No, for we are not to render evil for evil. (Rom. 12: 17-21) In such instances, Jesus' words apply: "Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him." (Matt. 5:39) One who refused to take a slight, refused to swallow his pride, was Haman the Agagite. King Ahasuerus had ordered that all bow down before Haman, but Mordecai the Jew, for good reasons, refused to do so. This so enraged proud and vain Haman that he was determined to kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews. In the end Haman was first greatly humiliated and shortly thereafter died on the stake he had prepared for Mordecai. Had Haman swallowed his pride and ignored the slight Mordecai gave him, he might not have come to such an untimely and humiliating end. (Esther, chaps. 3 to 9) Well do we read: "A fool shows his ill humour at once; a clever man slighted conceals his feelings."—Prov. 12:16, *The New English Bible.*

Then again, it pays to swallow our pride and apologize if we have wronged another by some word or action. We really owe it to ourselves and the other person to make amends. As Jesus counseled in his Sermon on the Mount: "If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift." —Matt. 5:23, 24.

Still another instance in which we may need to swallow our pride is to admit a mistake when we have made one. Nobody knows everything; nobody is perfect. So when we find that we really did not know what we were talking about, or made some mistake in judgment and so acted unwisely, the course of wisdom is to admit it to others who may be affected by it. This is especially important on the part of those having oversight, be they parents, supervisors or appointed elders in a congregation.—Compare James 3:1, 2.

Also, it will pay us to swallow our pride by always expecting less than we think we are entitled to. Thus Jesus said that when invited to a banquet we should take the lowest seat, even though we might feel that we are entitled to a more honorable one. Better it is to be asked to go to a more honorable seat than to be asked to step down to a less honorable one.—Luke 14:7-11.

Truly, there are many reasons, are there not, for our swallowing our pride? It does pay to do so.

What has given real meaning to my life

as told by Jaya Reddy

IT WAS my love of books that first awakened my interest in religion. For as far back as I can remember, books have held a special fascination for me.

One day I was searching among a pile of books for something to read when I came across one with an unusual title, *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*. We had obtained it from one of Jehovah's Witnesses who had called at our door. It had been left in the drawer, forgotten and untouched. I found it strangely absorbing. Within a week I had read it from cover to cover.

I was 12 years old at the time. The book awakened my interest in the Bible, the textbook of a religion different from my own. I was born into a Hindu family, but I really never practiced the religion. We live in Durban, that bustling port on the east coast of South Africa.

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

My mother had three children and all of us had one thing in common. We were all born with a hereditary disease, muscular dystrophy. There are three different forms of the disease. My elder brother had the worst form, and he died at the age of four.

We were all normal and well at birth, deceptively so. It is later that the signs show up—perhaps a weakness in the arms, a lack of strength in the legs, which causes one to stumble suddenly, and, over the years, a progressive slowness in the limbs

and muscles. The disease creeps up on one in a slow, insidious manner.

Over the years, more and more of my muscles have weakened as a result of the disease. Thus, to do such simple things as eating or combing my hair require unusual effort. Even sitting can put a great strain on the muscles. My muscles are so very weak that I have to wear the lightest clothes and I sit only with the aid of a spinal brace.

When the muscles tire through strain, they become tense and ache, sometimes for days. At times the tension buildup in my muscles is so bad that every nerve and fibre screams with the ache. The muscles that enable one to sit weakened over the years, and I developed a curvature of the spine.

When I was 18 I underwent a major operation for correction of the spine. This was the Harrington procedure, whereby steel rods are placed in the spine to keep it straight and are kept in place by steel screws. In my brother's case the progress of the disease was much slower, but eventually he, too, ended up in a wheelchair in his mid-teens.

DEVELOPING WIDE INTERESTS

Being confined to a wheelchair did not keep me from developing many interests. My mother is to be thanked for that. She did her utmost for us, sparing nothing and sacrificing much. She gave us a normal upbringing. We were never pampered or mollycoddled.

I was 11 years old when mother first suggested that I take up writing. It would be the ideal thing, she said. I could work at home, in my own time. The idea appealed to me. Apart from the practical considerations, I loved the world of make-believe. I was also the introspective type, given to daydreaming and reverie. So my early attempts at writing were all fairy tales.

On looking back now, I'm glad I began at an early age, since writing is not an easy profession. Yet it is something that grows on you and develops with you. Inevitably it becomes so much a part of you that one portion of your mind is always automatically absorbing ideas, impressions and thoughts for future use.

I developed a particular interest in history and wildlife. Also, I read all that I could find on religion. Because I loved poetry and literature, I found the rare lyricism and beauty of the Bible especially striking. Later, with my growing awareness of life and the injustices of man's inhumanity to man, I developed an interest in sociology and the humanities.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS IN RELIGION

When I was 15 I joined one of the minor "Christian" sects, and attended its services occasionally in an effort to find something satisfying and wholesome. But I was deeply dissatisfied with much that I saw.

I noticed that the priest, with a few exceptions, took no interest in the members of his flock. He appeared to be very prosperous, for he often had a new car and lived well. Also, racial inequality was practiced. A Black priest earned far less than his White counterpart. The sermons were a bore. One sermon was no different from another and they seemed to concentrate on just a handful of scriptures.

I questioned the ability that certain members of the church were supposed to have of speaking in tongues and healing the disabled. Despite my physical condition, in my search for the truth I was not looking for physical healing. It seemed unreasonable to me that a God of love would heal a few while overlooking the sufferings of the masses. I felt sure there was something deeper involved.

I was learning nothing in church. So I stopped attending and decided to study the Bible on my own.

DEVELOPING VIEWPOINTS

In the meantime, I had begun to question life around me. History as a whole seemed to be marked by man's inhumanity to man, inequality, injustice and oppression of the poor by a handful who held the reins of power. We needed an ideology that spelled freedom and equality for all and that allowed the individual to develop freely to his full potential.

I felt strongly that the answer lay in politics, for power in the right hands exercised in the right way could result in good. How much better it would be if our leaders were real Christians who cared about individual rights and freedoms and who allowed the teachings of Jesus Christ to guide their decisions for their country's benefit!

Occasionally I used to get *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* I noted that all facts and counsel given in these magazines were supported by the Bible. To me the reasoning was sound and especially suited for the problems and difficulties experienced in today's world. But there was one point in particular that I could not accept: The neutrality of Christians in political affairs. True Christians, I was convinced, could be a powerful force for good in the world if they became politically involved.

In Coming Issues

- **Does God Really Exist?**
- **Can the Smoking of Others Hurt You?**
- **Who Can Find Contentment?**

As I came to feel more strongly about this, the more I disagreed with the Witnesses on their political neutrality. And yet I admired their stand. From my study of history, I agreed that war was a terrible thing. Two world wars had caused enough havoc for us to wish that we would never repeat the mistake.

Actually, I was against all mindless killing, including the wanton destruction of wildlife. Through man's folly and selfishness, many beautiful and rare species were on the verge of extinction. From my study of the Bible, I knew that God had not purposed it to be so. Man's dominion over God's animal creation was meant to be a dominion of love.

I became convinced that the answer to man's problems lay somewhere within the pages of the Bible. But my knowledge was too inadequate. Meanwhile, I had decided to use my writing as a vehicle for highlighting the hardships and oppression suffered by the Blacks. I felt there had to be a change.

THE SOURCE OF TRUE WISDOM

At this point in my life, I went into the hospital for the spinal operation. Recovery was slow and lengthy. Two years later, when I was 20, I began an in-depth study of the Bible.

A Witness with whom I was slightly acquainted rang me up one day in January 1969 for a friendly chat. I invited him to come by that weekend. He placed the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* with me, saying: "I know you'll read it within the week. But reading it is not enough. The material the book contains is deep and requires careful study."

True enough, I did finish it by the following weekend. When he returned, he suggested a Bible study. I accepted. On his next visit, he asked my brother to join in. He agreed, but, being an atheist, he did so very reluctantly.

I did not learn everything at once. True learning is when knowledge sinks into a

person's heart and becomes a part of his very being. One must mull it over and meditate on it, as the apostle said: "Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them." (1 Tim. 4:15) God's Word, I came to appreciate, is indeed the source of true wisdom.

THE MESSAGE THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

The "ideology" of the Bible, our study revealed, is *theocracy*—rule by God. God will establish a new system of real peace for mankind. God's kingdom for which Christians were taught to pray will bring this about. (Matt. 6:9, 10) I was surprised to learn that this kingdom is a real government in the hands of God's Son, Jesus Christ, and that it will wipe from the earth all human governments and restore the earth to a beautiful paradise. (Isa. 9:6, 7; Dan. 2:44) Thus the world will once again be free of conflict and strife.

In that system, too, there will be wise direction, unlike the situation in this system, where one often sees the wrong people occupying positions of responsibility. "I have seen servants on horses but princes walking on the earth just like servants." (Eccl. 10:7) Those in positions of responsibility under God's kingdom will be selected by God's direction. Each person will be able to develop to his full potential and will bring to that society his own individuality.

Ultimately, true knowledge and wisdom will bring what is good and worth while and constructive. For example, if all the money that is spent today on the arms race were spent on educating and feeding the poor, how much happier the world would be! As God's Word says: "Wisdom is better than implements for fighting, and merely one sinner can destroy much good." —Eccl. 9:18.

The citizens of God's new system, I began to see, are being prepared now for life then. They are living examples of how workable true Christianity is. I liked what I was learning and found it fully satisfying. At the end of the year, in December 1970, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by being baptized. Later my brother was baptized. Over the years my mother also grew to love and accept our beliefs.

SOURCE OF REAL PLEASURE

What has given me special joy has been sharing the Kingdom hope with others. Due to my physical handicap, I do most of my witnessing through writing. When interesting subjects such as abortion, conscientious objection, cruelty to animals, speaking in tongues, and so forth, are mentioned in the press, I write to the publication giving the Biblical angle. I always include my name and address and often people write to me personally when they read my observations. This gives me a chance to write back, giving them a witness regarding God's grand purposes for humankind. I also do a lot of informal witnessing, and have had Bible studies with children in the congregation.

In the long run, what a person really needs in life is the love and understanding of friends. Jehovah's organization furnishes us with such genuine friends and real warmth. I have noticed that those who pursue material riches are generally dissatisfied and lonely. They lose sight of real things. It's like grasping the shadow and losing the substance.

Above all, I have learned that what really matters in life is an individual's relationship with Jehovah God. The closer a person draws to him, the more he comes to know the healing power and operation of Jehovah's spirit in his life. Only then can a person know the real richness of living, of being whole and sound, of joy undiminished. How grand it will be when our hope is realized in God's righteous new system!—2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:3, 4.

What happens at death?

JESUS' good friend Lazarus has died. Yet Jesus is telling his disciples: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep."

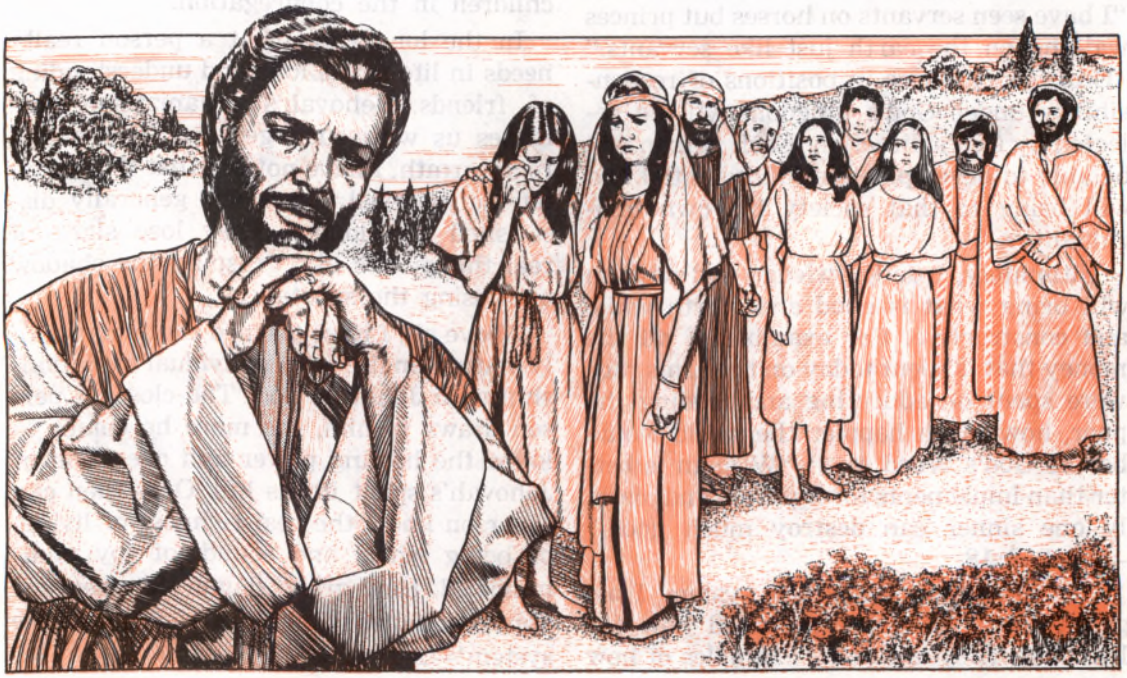
"Lord, if he has gone to rest, he will get well," the disciples reply.

At that Jesus explains plainly to them: "Lazarus has died."

Why did Jesus say Lazarus was sleeping when actually he had died? What happens at death? A look at Jesus' visit to see Lazarus will help to answer these questions.

When Lazarus' sister Martha learns that Jesus is approaching, she runs to meet him. Soon her sister Mary and all their friends also come out to meet Jesus. When Jesus sees their sorrow, he weeps. He asks: "Where have you laid him?"

When they get to the memorial tomb—it is a cave, and a stone is lying against it—Jesus says:



"Take the stone away." At this Martha protests, as you can see, saying: "Lord, by now he must smell." It had been four days since Lazarus died. However, at Jesus' encouragement the stone is removed.

After praying to God, Jesus calls out: "Lazarus, come on out!" And he does! He comes out alive, *still* wrapped in graveclothes. "Loose him and let him go," Jesus says.—John 11:11-44.

Now think about this: What was Lazarus' condition during those four days he was dead? Had he been in heaven? He was a good man. Yet he did not say anything about being in heaven, which surely he would have done if he had been there. No, Lazarus was really dead, even as Jesus said he was. Then why did Jesus at first tell his disciples that Lazarus was only sleeping?

Well, Jesus knew that the dead Lazarus was unconscious, as the Bible says: "The dead . . . are conscious of nothing at all." (Eccl. 9:5) But just as a living person can be awakened from a deep sleep, so Jesus was going to show that, by means of God's power given to him, his friend Lazarus could be awakened from death.

So, even as a person in a very deep sleep remembers nothing while he is asleep, it is similar with the dead. They experience no sensations whatsoever. They *no* longer exist. But, in God's due time, the dead who are ransomed by God will be raised to life. Surely this knowledge should motivate us to want to win God's favor so that we will come within his provision for a resurrection to life.—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

Church and the Bomb

● On the 35th anniversary of the atomic bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Roman Catholic chaplain who served the airmen involved voiced strong misgivings. According to the Chicago "Tribune," priest George Zabelka "says he was 'brainwashed' by his church's silence and wholehearted cooperation with the U.S. military." The clergyman, now retired, reportedly declared that atomic bombing "happened in a world and to a Christian church that had 'asked for it'—by preparing the moral consciousness of humanity to justify the unthinkable."

Zabelka pointed out that Nagasaki had the largest Catholic population in Japan, and said: "One would have thought that I, as a Catholic priest, would have spoken out against the atomic bombing of nuns," since three orders of nuns were destroyed in the blast. He also observed: "One would have thought . . . as a minimal standard of Catholic morality, Catholics shouldn't bomb Catholic children. I didn't." And neither did thousands of other clergymen on both sides of the conflict who exhorted their adherents to join in the slaughter of their fellow church members on the other side.

Lawbreakers Are Lawmakers

● Recently, certain members of the U.S. Congress have been convicted during the Federal Bureau of Investigation's so-called "Abscam" investigation for accepting bribes. Such cases and others "represent an amazing criminal count in the House of Representatives," according to New York "Daily News" columnist Jimmy Breslin. In fact, "over the past couple of years, five congressmen have been sent to prison, eight have been indicted for stealing, one has been [arrested] for obstructing a police officer, another for soliciting a prostitute and three have been [arrested] for bothering young boys."

"Some people stand back from this and say that these figures merely prove that the House of Representatives reflects the population it represents," said Breslin. Such an observation is "ridiculous," he wrote, because in such an elite group, "to have 18 people in trouble with the law is a figure that explodes in the sky high above the number for the rest of the population." The figures mean that "one out of every 34 congressmen gets into criminal activity and is arrested," he asserted, noting that if the inhabitants of one high-crime neighborhood in New York were arrested at the same rate as congressmen, 22,000 would have been charged instead of the 4,019 who actually were.

The only real solution to such failures in human governments will come when "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that . . . will crush and put an end to all these [human] kingdoms."—Dan. 2:44.

Shroud "A Fake"

● The "Shroud of Turin" is reputed to show a miraculous image of Christ imprinted on a cloth that wrapped Jesus' body after his death. Recently, scientists examined the relic, and findings of one researcher were reported in England's Yorkshire "Post." Dr. Walter C. McCrone told the British Society for the Turin Shroud in London that he has detected microscopic quantities of red oxide clinging to the surface of the cloth. He said that this was similar to the earth pigments many artists use.

Calling the shroud "a fake," he stated that if radiocarbon dating tests were taken, the cloth would probably date to the 14th century, adding: "It was very fashionable to make frauds at that time." However, the "Post" observes: "What many believe to be the 'acid test' for the shroud, carbon dating, has so far been resisted by the Church on grounds it would destroy part of the cloth."

When interviewed on the BBC Radio 4 "Today" program, Dr. McCrone asserted: "I don't think there's any possibility that I could be wrong. The particles of iron oxide that I found convince me that pigments would have had to . . . [be] applied in the way that an artist would have put it on." Whether he is right or not, such controversies illustrate the superiority of the truly Christian position: "We walk by faith and not by sight."—2 Cor. 5:7, Catholic "Douay Version."

Do not fall prey to modern-day Judaizers!

NINETEEN hundred years ago a group of persons tried to live in the past. By so doing they deprived themselves of great blessings. Who were they?

They were persons who claimed to be Christians, but were really trying to make an apostate fusion religion of Christianity and Judaism. They were Judaizers. They taught that Gentiles who became Christians should be circumcised "according to the custom of Moses" in order to be saved. Indeed, some such persons felt that it was necessary to teach new believers to observe the Mosaic law.—Acts 15:1-5.

The Judaizers were overly conscious of the fact that for more than 1,500 years God had dealt exclusively with the Jewish people. During that time anyone from another nation who wanted to become a worshiper of Jehovah needed to become a proselyte, or convert, to Judaism. Such a person would be 'circumcised and charged to observe the law of Moses,' which is just what the Judaizers wanted to do with the new Christian disciples.

However, with the establishing of the Christian congregation, there was a change. It was no longer necessary to be a Jew or a Jewish proselyte in order to serve God. Nor should this change have come as a surprise. As the Christian apostle Paul pointed out, Jehovah had foretold as much through his ancient prophets. "It is as he says also in Hosea," Paul observed: "Those not my people I will call 'my people.' "—Rom. 9:25; Hos. 2:23.

It required faith for a first-century Jew to become a Christian—faith in what Jehovah's prophecies said about his gathering people of the nations, as well as natural Jews. It required humility for Jewish Christians to acknowledge that birth as a Jew no longer automatically made one a member of God's people. The Judaizers did not have such faith or humility. They tried to cling to the past, and so lost out on marvelous blessings. In what way?

By overestimating the importance of being a *physical* Jew, they failed to appreciate what is meant by being a *spiritual* Jew. At that time the way was open for persons to become members of "the Israel of God"—spiritual Israel. (Gal. 6:15, 16) The Israel of God consists of 144,000 persons whom the Bible describes as being in heaven with Jesus Christ, a glorious prospect!—Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

ARE ALL "CHRISTIANS" SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES?

Today it is no longer difficult for people to imagine Christians' going to heaven to be with Christ Jesus. For many hundreds of years the churches of Christendom have been teaching that *all* good church members go to heaven. So, today, they teach that *all* Christians are spiritual Israelites.

Such a teaching leaves unanswered a number of basic Bible questions. For example, Paul told members of spiritual Israel that "if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham's seed, heirs with reference to a promise." (Gal. 3:29) What was that promise? It was the promise that God gave Abraham long ago that he would have a "seed" and that "by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice."—Gen. 22:18.

So the question arises, If the spiritual Israelites make up Abraham's "seed," who are the "nations" that get a blessing? No doubt those "nations" would include resurrected persons who lived before Christ. But is that all? Do the Scriptures indicate that *all* the Christians living at the time when the promises are fulfilled would be spiritual Israelites? To the contrary!

Consider what is foretold in the prophetic book of Revelation, chapter 7. The first eight verses of this chapter describe the sealing of 144,000 persons representing "every tribe of the sons of Israel." There is no question that these are spiritual Israelites. Then what?

"After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.' "—Rev. 7:9, 10.

Are these latter persons Christians? Obviously, since they are approved by God and owe their salvation to his Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Are they spiritual Israelites? Clearly they are *not*, since they are described as coming out of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, *after* John describes the sealing of the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel. Thus, it is evident that not all Christians today are spiritual Israelites.

FORETOLD BY JESUS

That many Christians are not spiritual Israelites should not be a surprise. Jesus himself predicted such a development in his well-known parable of the fine shepherd. In his parable Jesus spoke of a fold, or pen, for a smaller flock, and of a much larger flock, comprised of these and also of his "other sheep."

It was after discussing at length the sheep that "go in and out" of the fold, that Jesus went on to say: "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:8, 16) What did Jesus mean by "other sheep, which are not of this fold"?

Jesus was describing a large flock, some members of which lived in the "sheepfold" and some members of which did not. All the sheep belonged to the same enlarged flock, but not all of them lived in the fold. The flock could be quite large—indefinite as to size—but only a limited number of sheep could fit inside the fold, which was typically a stone pen with walls of definite length and height.—John 10:1-9.

MODERN-DAY "JUDAIZERS"

Many people today believe that all Christians must be spiritual Israelites, just as the ancient Judaizers believed that all Christians had to be literal Jews or proselytes. The major denominations of Christendom all teach this way. So they explain Jesus' parable to mean that the first Christian disciples were from inside the "fold" of Judaism, and later disciples, the "other sheep," were taken from outside that "fold," being Gentiles. Then, according to the churches of Christendom, both the "sheep" inside the "fold" and the "other sheep" became spiritual Israelites with a heavenly hope.

While this may sound plausible, it overlooks a key feature of Jesus' illustration. Jesus indicated that there would *continue to be* sheep inside the "fold" as well as "sheep" outside it in his enlarged flock. Nowhere does the parable indicate that the "other sheep" are somehow jammed into the small "fold," or pen. Nor does the parable indicate that the fold itself was destroyed so that there would no longer be a difference between the sheep formerly

inside it and the "other sheep." Jesus' comment that the sheep would go "in and out" of the pen and "find pasturage" indicates that the pen was a permanent arrangement. It represents the continuing arrangement of the Abrahamic covenant, not that of the Law covenant, which God took "out of the way by nailing it to the torture stake." (Col. 2:14) But not all of the flock would have access to the pen. As *Today's English Version* puts it, "There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen," though they, too, "bless themselves" through faith and obedience.

If the fold, or pen, represents an *ongoing* distinction between two classes of Christians, then it cannot represent the difference between Jews and Gentiles, because that distinction is *abolished* in the spirit-begotten "little flock." (Luke 12:32) As Paul put it: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one person in union with Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:15.

The only ongoing distinction between two classes of Christians would be the distinction between *spiritual* Jews and those who are not such. This is the same as the distinction between Abraham's "seed" and the "nations" who would be blessed by it. It is the same as the distinction between the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel, mentioned in Revelation chapter 7, and the limitless "great crowd" of persons from all the nations mentioned right afterward.

Just as the early Judaizers did not want to admit that a person could serve God without being a Jew or a proselyte, today's "Judaizers" do not want to admit that a person can serve God without being a spiritual Jew. They say that all Christians must be anointed as Kingdom heirs. Yet since 1935 millions of "other sheep" have been serving God faithfully, despite the ridicule and sometimes the persecution of modern-day "Judaizers," including the members and clergy of Christendom.

These "other sheep" are Christians. They put full faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice and follow his footsteps. Yet they have no desire to go to heaven. Although the Bible indicates that God's spirit bears witness to members of spiritual Israel that they have a heavenly hope, it bears no such witness to the "other sheep." (Rom. 8:15-17) The existence of such faithful Christians who have no heavenly hope cannot be explained if *all* Christians are going to heaven, as Christendom claims. But they *do* exist, over 2,000,000 in number, and produce the fruitage of God's holy spirit in abundance, although that same spirit does not tell them they are going to heaven.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

In the first century it took real courage to accept the teaching of the apostle Paul and admit that one who was not a Jew or proselyte could be a Christian. Few people believed as Paul did. The Jews could till 70 C.E. point to their temple in Jerusalem in their endeavor to "prove" that they were still God's organization. Or if that did not convince people, they could resort to outright persecution, as they often did.—Acts 9:23; 14:19; 20:3; 23:12-15.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses alone are pointing out from the Scriptures that persons can be Christians without being spiritual Jews. As in the first century, these Christians are few in number, comparatively speaking, and often unpopular. Christendom, which claims that all her members are spiritual Jews, can boast of her size, her wealth, her many temples, and so try to prove that she is God's organization. When that fails, she can resort to outright persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, as she has often done.

If you have been raised to believe that you are going to heaven because you are a member of a church of Christendom, then you are in a position very similar to

that of a Jew who might have heard the preaching of the apostle Paul. But do you have the humility and faith needed to consider closely what Jehovah's Witnesses are pointing out from the Bible? That is to say, are you humble enough to serve God, even though you are not of the "little flock" of spiritual Israelites? If so, you can put yourself in line for the wonderful blessings that "all nations of the earth" are to receive shortly through Jesus Christ and the "little flock"!—Gen. 22:18.

BABYLON'S RECORD—ANCIENT AND MODERN

When Noah's great-grandson Nimrod started to become a mighty one in the earth and set himself up as "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah," the beginning of his kingdom was at Babel, Babylon. It was at Babel that men, in defiance of Jehovah, decided to make a celebrated name for themselves by building a city with a religious tower. This was an apostasy, a falling away from the worship of Noah's God, a rebellion against Jehovah's sovereignty. But their building program resulted in dismal failure. Jehovah came down and confused their language. No longer able to communicate with one another, they divided off according to language groups and were scattered from Babel "over all the surface of the earth." (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9) Their false religion went with them. It became a world empire of false religion, mystic "Babylon the Great."

The common origin of the world's religions is plain to see. There are so many similarities! For example, ancient Babylon featured the worship of Semiramis and her infant Nimrod, so similar to the worship of Madonna and child in apostate Christianity. In his book "Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism," Thomas Inman says of mother-and-child images: "Such groups are as common in India as in Italy, in pagan temples as in Christian churches. The idea of the mother and child is pictured **in every ancient country** of whose art any remains exist."

The Roman Catholic cardinal John Henry Newman, in his "Essay on the Development of Christian doctrine," wrote of many such practices and doctrines, saying that they "are all of pagan origin" and that they are "sanctified by their adoption into the church." But the latter is not so! By embracing Babylonish beliefs and ceremonies, modern-day Catholicism and Protestantism, along with Judaism, have added no holiness or sanctity to false religious practices and doctrines. Rather, they have identified themselves as daughter organizations of "Babylon the Great."—Rev. 17:5.

These "daughter" religions have shared prominently on both sides in the crusades and other sectarian wars of history. The two world wars of modern times got started between so-called "Christian" nations, while Shintoists and Buddhists also became deeply involved. On both sides, the religious clergy contributed to whipping up the war fever. Rather than represent the 'God of love,' the world empire of false religion has always been a leading fomenter of hatred. To this day, Catholics and Protestants fight one another in Northern Ireland. Religion lies behind much of the violence in the Middle East.

However, Babylon the Great is most reprehensible for what is described at Revelation 17:6. Here we read: "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." Those words have had tragic fulfillment, such as in the persecutions of first-century Christians, in the Inquisitions of the Dark Ages and in Catholic Hitler's modern-day violent suppression of Jehovah's Witnesses! Will the 'God of love' avenge this bloodguilt? Most certainly he will!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S BABYLON

Of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's time, M'Clintock and Strong's "Cyclopædia" says: "Babylon, as the centre of a great kingdom, was the seat of boundless luxury, and its inhabitants were notorious for their addiction to self-indulgence and effeminacy. [The theologian Curtius] asserts that 'nothing could be more corrupt than its morals, nothing more fitted to excite and allure to immoderate pleasures. The rites of hospitality were polluted by the grossest and most shameless lusts.' " After describing the depraved sex worship and corruption of that city, the "Cyclopædia" concludes: "Babylon even stands, therefore in the New Test[ament] (Rev. xvii, 5) as the type of the most shameless profligacy and idolatry."

QUESTIONS from READERS

● The *Commentary on the Letter of James*, on page 47, states: "Besides being the God of Christians, Jehovah is also their Father, for he has begotten them by means of his spirit to be his sons." And the question on page 57 relating to this reads: "How is God also the Father to Christians?" Does this mean that all dedicated and baptized Christians have been begotten by God's holy spirit to be his sons?

No, this is not the thought that should be gathered from this, as though we now had a change of understanding in this matter. Such a change would nullify the Scriptural teaching as to two separate destinies for those gaining salvation, a heavenly one and an earthly one. Rather, the *Commentary* takes it for granted that the student reading James 1:1 and the comments made on the expression in that verse "to the twelve tribes" (see pages 12 and 13) would appreciate that the restrictive number of those making up spiritual Israel are begotten by means of God's spirit to be his sons.—Gal. 6:16; Rev. 14:1.

To avoid ambiguity, the *Commentary* could have inserted the word "anointed" in this sentence on the bottom of page 47. Thus it could have read: "Besides being the God of *anointed* Christians, Jehovah is also their Father, for he has begotten them by means of his spirit to be his sons." Then the question on page 57 on this portion could have read: "How is God also the Father of *anointed* Christians?"

Christendom, with its beliefs that man has an immortal soul, that at death all go to either heaven or hell (or, purgatory) and that someday the earth will be destroyed by fire, does not allow for an earthly destiny for any of God's faithful servants. But those who have a clear understanding of Jehovah's purposes regarding the earth and man are convinced that someday there will be an earth-wide paradise peopled by faithful human servants of God.

In this regard it might also be observed that Jehovah God, while being the Father in a unique way to spirit-begotten, anointed Christians (Rom. 8:14-17; 1 John 3:2), is also spoken of in the Scriptures as the Father of those whose destiny will be earthly. Thus Isaiah 63:16 reads: "For you are our Father; although Abraham himself may not have known us and Israel himself may not recognize us, you, O Jehovah, are our Father." Therefore all the "great crowd" of "other sheep" may rightly pray: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified."—Matt. 6:9; John 10:16; Rev. 7:9.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

February 15: Why Will a Loving God Exact Vengeance? Page 3. Songs to Be Used: 72, 59.

February 22: Is God's Day of Vengeance Near? Page 8. Songs to Be Used: 77, 105.